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THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL VIEWS OF
SPENSER

As one of the most eclectic scholars of a period when thought was rife and universal knowledge the ideal of the educated gentleman, as a poet who wove much traditional history and many contemporary events into the fabric of his allegory, and as a man of affairs who was kept face to face with the stern problems of public life in an outpost of empire, Spenser possesses much interest for the student of culture-history. Accordingly, the present study attempts to determine the poet's attitude toward the political, economic, and social ideas of his day. The consideration of his political views naturally comes first, since they constitute the most comprehensive phase of the subject.

It was inevitable that the decline of the Holy Roman Empire, relieving men, as it did, from the confusion of a divided loyalty, should greatly augment the national ideal, and the sixteenth century consequently witnessed a marked growth in the spirit of nationalism. In England, this influence was enforced by geographical insularity, by the reaction following the Wars of the Roses, by the rapid expansion of commerce, and by the spirit of enthusiasm that the Tudors seemed ever able to arouse. It is but one evidence of this spirit that a whole school of historians gave themselves to the study of the nation's past, and that which the historian wrote in sober prose, the dramatist set forth upon the stage in glowing verse.

In this Elizabethan pride of nation Spenser most heartily shared. Love of native land and faith in the destiny of England again and again find utterance in his verse. History, chronicle, romance, whatever dealt with the nation's past was eagerly read, and much of it incorporated into the magical pages of the great allegory, or turned to practical account in the prose *View of the Present State of Ireland*. Such interest in the national history is called in the *Faerie Queene* the "naturall desire of countryes state," and Prince Arthur closes the volume of British history which he has read "quite ravisht with delight," with sentiments which may very properly be taken for the poet's own:

Deare country! O! how dearely deare
Ought thy remembraunce and perpetuall band
Be to thy foster Childe, that from thy hand

Did commun breath and nouriture receave.
 How brutish is it not to understand
 How much to her we owe, that all us gave;
 That gave unto us all what ever good we have.¹

Nor is there any mistaking the pride, and traditional English confidence in the national institutions and customs that dictate many a passage in the *View*: "As for the lawes of England, they are surely most just and most agreeable both with the government and with the nature of the people."² "No nation in the world excelleth them (the English) in all goodly conversation, and all the studyes of knowledge and humanitye."³ "And is it possible that an Englishman, brought up naturally in such sweete civilitye as England affordes, can find such liking in that barbarous rudeness, that he should forgett his owne nature, and forgoe his owne nation."⁴

Again, the concluding cantos of the *Allegory of Justice*, the fifth book, in which the poet treats of England's international relations, is instinct with the proudest patriotism. The story of the destruction of the Spanish Armada is set forth with a nervous vigour, a zest, an elation, that show how intensely the poet felt this triumph of English brains and courage:

In vaine the Pagan bannes, and sweares, and rayles,
 And backe with both his hands unto him hayles
 The resty raynes, regarded now no more;
 He to them calles and speakes, yet nought avalyes;
 They hear him not, they have forgot his lore,
 But go which way they list, their guide they have forlore.

At last they have all overthrowne to ground
 Quite topside turvey, and the Pagan hound
 Amongst the yron hookes and graples keene
 Torne all to rags, and rent with many a wound;
 That no whole peece of him was to be seene,
 But scattered all about, and strow'd upon the greene.⁵

Small chance, indeed, for an enemy to triumph, since it was Prince Arthur who fought for England, Prince Arthur, who symbolized the spirit of God in the national and political life, bearing upon

¹ *F. Q.*, 2. 10. 69.

² *P.* 613.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 629.

⁵ *F. Q.*, 5. 8. 39, 42.

his conquering shield the cross of St. George, the token of God's protection of England, the confusion of her enemies.

No idea is more persistently reiterated in the *Faërie Queene* than that England was called of God to a high destiny; indeed, the whole first book, politically interpreted, is an elaborate allegory of England's exalted service in establishing the true Church. Spenser was never more English than when he thus naïvely expressed the traditional English belief in "the splendid British patriotism of England's God"; so easy is it to construe *Dieu et Mon Droit* as *Mon Droit est Dieu*.

Not only did Spenser thus share in the new sense of national pride, but there is not a little evidence to support the theory that he was one of that ardent group of patriots, a group that included such stout hearts and pushing spirits as Gilbert, Raleigh and Sidney, who had dreams of world empire for England, and who advocated British imperialism with as much warmth as the sensitive autocracy of the Queen would permit.

For land and sea my Cynthia doth deserve
To have in her commandement at hand,

says the poet through the mouth of Raleigh, the Shepherd of the Ocean, and, when the poet has occasion to mention the Amazon among the famous rivers that came to the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, he cannot refrain from inserting the stanza:

Joy on those warlike women, which so long
Can from all men so rich a kingdome hold!
And shame on you, O men! which boast your strong
And valiant hearts, in thoughts lesse hard and bold,
Yet quaille in conquest of that land of gold.
But this to you, O Britons! most pertaines,
To whom the right hereof it selfe hath sold,
The which, for sparing little cost or paines,
Looke so immortall glory, and so endlesse gaines.⁶

Furthermore, whatever we moderns may think of its antiquated political philosophy, of the harshness of the measures proposed for the subjection of a rebellious island, the *View* is the product of a mind that thought imperially.⁷

A second noteworthy characteristic of sixteenth century political evolution was the growing ascendancy of the monarchical ideal. This, again, was the result of several forces. One of these

⁶ *F. Q.*, 4. 11. 22.

⁷ See E. A. Greenlaw, *Spenser and British Imperialism*, *Mod. Phil.*, 9. 3.

was, of course, the decline of the Empire; another was the decay of the feudal system; a third, the doctrine of the divine character of secular government, based upon a literal and universal application of the words of Jesus "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," as taught by such leaders of the Reformation as Calvin, Zwingli, and Melancthon; and still a fourth, the well-nigh sacred authority of Aristotle. The first relieved the pressure upon the prestige of monarchy from above; the second, the pressure from below. The third and fourth insured the twofold authority of sacred and profane writers at a time when scriptural authority and classical authority were vying with one another for supremacy in the minds of men. Curiously enough, the Reformation and the Renaissance, which were to end in undermining the monarchical system, began by stoutly supporting it.

Though to Aristotle royalty was invested with no peculiar divine authority, but rather was a more or less interesting survival from archaic times and conditions, the Stagarite favored a constitutional monarchy, and, despite the growth of anti-Aristotelian sentiment, a sentiment congenial to certain phases of the Renaissance and quickened by the radical utterances of Pierre de la Ramée, the authority of Aristotle, as evidenced by the appearance of thirteen editions, twelve Latin translations, and six commentaries of the *Politics* between 1500 and 1600, was still dominant.

In the last quarter of the century, the monarchical ideal, already sufficiently intrenched, received a powerful ally in the French scholar and jurist, Jean Bodin, the foremost student in the science of government of the century, and one of the foremost students of all time, who, in the words of Professor Dunning, "set the theory of the state and the science of government once more where Aristotle had placed it, on a foundation of history, and by the side of, not dependent from the sciences of ethics and theology."⁸ For the origin of the ruler, Bodin did not look back to the mythical age of Saturn, when some man was chosen to this position for his preëminent wisdom and virtue, nor did he accept the theory, equally superstitious, that the ruler was divinely chosen, but he found the origin of leadership in those primitive social conditions where some man imposed his sway by force. In his defence of monarchy as the best form of government for a

⁸ *Political Theories from Luther to Montesquieu*, 123.

modern country, Bodin is a pure pragmatist, and he prefers a monarchy for three reasons: first, because, free from that factionalism that always operates in an aristocracy or a democracy, the monarch can draw upon all classes for service; secondly, because the concentration of power insures safety to the country; lastly, because monarchy is the only form of government adapted to the expansion of the domain.

Yet the monarchical theory was not without its doughty assailants. In 1573 appeared the *Franco-Gallia*, by the eminent Huguenot jurist, Francis Hotman, in which French history was drawn upon to demonstrate that "France was never, in its constitutional origins, an absolute monarchy; but that, on the contrary, a general assembly of the nation had exercised the highest political powers throughout the early history of the Franks, and during the Merovingian, the Carolingian and the later periods." In 1579 appeared two notable works, one in France and one in Scotland, which advanced the contract theory of government. One of these was the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, written presumably by Languet, the Huguenot friend of Sidney, or by Du Plessis-Mornay; the other, *On the Sovereign Power Among the Scots*, written by George Buchanan. It certainly is one of the ironies of history that the later Reformation thought should thus have turned against the doctrine of monarchy that the founders of the Reformation had done so much to advance. While the earlier Reformers based their political attitude upon the chance words of Christ, these later men turned to the *Old Testament* and discovered in the covenant of the Old Dispensation a valid analogy for the relations between king and people. Just as the children of Israel, as God's peculiar people, guaranteed to uphold his worship in return for the guarantee of his favour, so the people agree to obey the king, and he, to rule justly. One was a contract for the welfare of the Kingdom of Heaven; the other, for the welfare of the kingdoms of the earth. But a contract is invalid if either party breaks it, and, if kings fail to be just, people are relieved from the obligation of loyalty. While this conception of government did not reap its fruit until the following century, it commanded the attention of thinking men in the closing decades of the sixteenth. In fact, when an idea thus found spontaneous expression in two countries, it must have been more or less pervasive.

The monarchical theory was also jeopardized by the current humanistic ideas about the law of nature, which found their way into every philosophical and political treatise. Melanchthon and Bodin, far removed from each other as they were, were equally insistent upon recognizing those fundamental principles of human nature whose validity must not be denied. Any institution that did not square with these universal principles was, in the very nature of things, bad. Henceforth, political and social theorists of all schools were busy trying to justify their doctrines on the basis of such laws.

Against this background, it is interesting to view Spenser's theory of government. There are many passages in his works that bear upon the question, and they all show him to be an unqualified exponent of the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Indeed, with such insistence does he return to the theme, that, in the light of his eagerness for preferment, it is hard not to question his motives. The sovereign is the special representative of God, from whom alone his authority is derived, and in whose political wisdom he is permitted to share:

He maketh Kings to sit in soverainty;
He maketh subjects to their powre obay.⁹

High Jove, in whose almightie hand
The care of Kings and power of Empires stand.¹⁰

That powre (justice) he also doth to Princes lend,
And makes them like himselfe in glorious sight

To sit in his owne seate, his cause to end,
And rule his people right, as he doth recommend.¹¹

Dread Soverayne Goddess, that doest highest sit
In seate of judgment in th' Almightyes stead,
And with magnificke might and wondrous wit
Doest to thy people righteous doome aread,
That furthest Nations filles with awful dread.¹²

Since the monarch is the vicegerent of Heaven, Heaven in turn protects the monarch against his treasonous enemies. Thus, Heaven revealed the intrigues of Mary Queen of Scots against Elizabeth:

But through high Heavens grace, which favours not
The wicked driftes of trayterous desynes

⁹ *F. Q.*, 5. 2. 41.

¹⁰ *M. H. T.*, 1225-6.

¹¹ *F. Q.*, 5, Introd. 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

Gainst loiall Princes, all this cursed plot,
Ere prooffe it tooke, discovered was betymes.¹³

Not only has the Prince jurisdiction over secular matters, but over spiritual matters as well, for in the *View* it is expressly recognized that the care of both body and soul lyeth upon him.

Such is the reverence held by the commonalty for the sacred person of the sovereign, that his mere presence is often of more avail than a whole army of men of common clay; he is, in truth, the most stable factor in government: "What they (the English) now be, both you and I see very well, but by how many thorny and hard wayes they are come thereunto, by how many civill broyles, by how many tumultuous rebellions, that even hazarded oftentimes the whole safetie of the kingdome, may easily be considered: all which they nevertheless fayrily overcame by reason of the continuall presence of the king; whose only parson is oftentimes in steede of an army, to contayne the unruly people from a thousand evill occasions."¹⁴

In this justification of monarchy upon theological grounds, Spenser shows how little he was influenced by the more advanced and more scientific political thought of the day. Thus he ignores the scholarly conclusions of Bodin that the primitive society was barbaric and that the first kings were military leaders who imposed their sway upon the people by force, ignores Bodin's masterly effort to justify absolute monarchy upon scientific and philosophical grounds. Yet he must have been familiar with Bodin's great work, *La Republique*, if he did not actually make the acquaintance of the author, for in 1579 Bodin, then in the service of the Duc d'Alençon, visited Cambridge and there met Harvey, Spenser's friend, who testifies to his popularity in the following passage from one of the letters: "His (Aristotle's) oeconomicks and politiques every on oath by rote. You can not stepp into a schollars studye but (ten to on) you shall litely finde open ether *Bodin de Republica* or *Le Royes Exposition vppon Aristotles Politiques* or sum other like Frenche or Italian *Politique Discoursed*."¹⁵ Bodin's critical use of history, showing as it does such broad erudition and keen insight, seemed to interest Spenser but slightly. Rather, he fell back, for his political authority, upon Aristotle, and the Reformers, with their literal scripturism.

¹³ *F. Q.*, 5. 9. 42.

¹⁴ *View*, p. 614.

¹⁵ *Letters of Gabriel Harvey, Huth*, 1. 137.

Indeed, he seems even to have been unaffected by the works of Pierre de la Ramée, the anti-Aristotelian, who, in 1536, startled the academic world with the thesis that whatever Aristotle had sought to establish was wrong. Yet Harvey boasted of his worship of Ramée's genius, the very first book from the Cambridge Press (1584) was an edition of the *Dialectica*, edited by Temple, and Sidney accepted the dedication of this book and professed himself a Ramist.

In his theory of the ultimate function of the state, Spenser held to the Aristotelian and Platonic doctrine that the state is an ethical agency, with virtue as its ideal. With these classical philosophers he regarded virtue—ἀρετή—as the principle of pure and ideal aristocracy, and the *Faërie Queene* is an attempt to portray the ideal knight perfected in all the individual virtues. Men should be expected to illustrate, exalt and uphold virtue in proportion to their authority and freedom, their weight in the national life. The severest condemnation of Cecil that the poet could express was that he despised virtue, for the ministers of the state should, as Plato and Aristotle advocated, be the most virtuous men:

O grieves of griefes! O gall of all good heartes!
 To see that vertue should despised bee
 Of him, that first was raisde for vertuous parts.

The scholar, the man of arms, the statesman, in particular are set apart and dedicated to the propagation and protection of virtue. This virtue, again, may be either intellectual or moral; the one cultivated by the life of scholarship and contemplation, the other by the life of statesmanlike and martial activity. It is such virtue that measures the character of a state, and it is neglect of virtue by its appointed guardians that spells the shame of a nation, a shame that Spenser laments so plaintively in *The Teares of the Muses*:

For they
 That wont the world with famous acts to fill,

 Have both desire of worthie deeds forlorne,
 And name of learning utterly do scorne.

 But they, whom thou, great Jove, by doome unjust
 Didst to the type of honour earst advaunce;
 They now, puft up with sdeignfull insolence,
 Despise the brood of blessed Sapience.

The sectaries of my celestiall skill,
That wont to be the worlds chiefe ornament,
And learned Impes that wont to shoote up still,
And grow to height of kingdomes government,
They underkeep, and with their spreading armes
Do beat their buds, that perish through their harmes.

It most behoves the honorable race
Of mightie Peeres true wisdom to sustaine,
And with their noble countenance to grace
The learned forheads, without gifts or gaine;
Or rather learned themselves behoves to bee,
That is the girlond of Nobilitie.¹⁶

The *View of the Present State of Ireland* confirms the deductions here made from the poetry, but as there will be occasion to quote from that work at some length in discussing Spenser's economic theories, consideration of it at this point may well be waived.

Whether from conviction or policy, Spenser was essentially a conservative in his political ideas; today we would call him a thoroughgoing "standpatter." In his controversy with the Gyant—Communism,—Artegall, the Knight of Justice, sums up his argument with the succinct declaration, "All change is perillous, and all chaunce unsound."¹⁷ Thus, like Aristotle, Spenser makes stability the desideratum in government. It was a political principle that met with the profound approval of the Tudors, and that was voiced by those political writers who enjoyed the favour of Elizabeth. Thus, in like vein, Smith writes in his *De Republica Anglorum*: "Certaine it is that it is alwayes a doubtfull and hasardous matter to meddle with the chaunging of the lawes and government which a man doth finde alreadie established."¹⁸

The student of letters thinks of the Elizabethan age as a period distinguished by a notable expansion of humanistic ideals and by a brilliant literature, but the period is of no less commanding interest to the economist. When Elizabeth became queen, England was an inferior nation commercially; ere her reign was over, English commerce held a commanding position. Reform of the coinage; a vigorous protective policy that fostered home industries and kept the balance of trade in England's favour;

¹⁶ Cf. the *View*, pp. 609 and 677 for other expressions of the office of the scholar and statesman.

¹⁷ *F. Q.*, 5. 2. 36.

¹⁸ *P.* 13.

the upbuilding of a great merchant marine through insistence that English commerce be carried in English bottoms; the policy of religious toleration, which brought to England expert workmen in many lines; the rigorous oversight of the mercantile system, even to the point of subordinating the welfare of the individual to the welfare of the nation; adjustments of the relations of capital and labor; are the noteworthy features of Elizabeth's commercial policy.

Most fundamental of all, and first in point of time, was the placing of the country upon a sound financial basis; without this reform England must have remained an insignificant commercial power. By 1560 the coinage was depreciated to one-seventh of its original value, the price of necessities had risen one hundred per cent, and barter was often preferred. An immediate financial reform was therefore inaugurated; the old coin was all called in, and new coin issued. Trade at once responded, and the country entered a period of marked prosperity.

A second monetary reform, dictated by the growing demand for investment, and in turn greatly augmenting investment, was the recognition of the lending of money for interest as legitimate. With the increased demand for capital, it was inevitable that the traditional attitude toward usury should change. In the middle centuries, when there was little chance for investment and a man's surplus lay idle, a loan was in the nature of a personal favour and to take interest was to take advantage of another's misfortune; but the question presented a new aspect when, with changing conditions, there was opportunity to invest one's surplus.

However, there was no economic question upon which the sixteenth century was more divided, or which was argued with more warmth. The Church had always condemned the practice as a violation of the Biblical principle that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and of the specific Gospel injunction, "Lend, hoping for nothing again," and Aristotle had condemned it on the more scientific ground that money was thus made to reproduce itself instead of being applied to the procurement of the necessities of life. By many of the Reformers, however, following the lead of Calvin, himself the product of a middle class business community, a man of legal mind and of great practical shrewdness, usury was defended as ethically and economically sound, and thereby gained in favour. Among the English Reformers, Jewel,

Bullinger, and Bucer all wrote in its defence. Where is the difference, Bullinger asks, in lending out money for reasonable return and in buying land with the said money and renting the land? Usury was accordingly first tolerated by the Parliament of 1545, then abrogated by the Parliament of 1552, and finally approved by the Parliament of 1571.

Next to the monetary situation, the question of employment and wages claimed attention. The industrial problems may be divided for convenience into the problems of the country and the problems of the city, or the agrarian problem and the mercantile problem. These must be approached historically.

The agrarian problem was by no means a new one. Ever since the Black Death had upset the relatively stable agricultural régime that had maintained for several centuries prior thereto, the agrarian problem had loomed large. Before that fateful malady, lord, villain and cotter had coöperated in cultivating the soil with a fair degree of contentment and sympathy. The typical manor embraced the demesne or land cultivated for the immediate benefit of the lords, consisting partly or separate closes and partly of acres scattered through the common fields; the virgates or holdings of the villains, normally thirty acres scattered through the common fields and comprising about three-fifths of the manor; and the holdings of the cottagers, one or two acres and a cottage. In return for their holdings, villain and cotter were required to give to the lord two or three days' work a week, and additional service in spring and fall. For agricultural purposes the land was divided into the arable fields, devoted wholly to crops; the meadow land, used for raising hay, and, after the harvest, for pasturing; and the permanent pasture or woodland, either shared in common or in proportion to the holdings, and devoted to grazing. The above provision for service, and certain other regulations governing the transfer of holdings from one generation to another, constituted what came to be known as "customary tenure," legal recognition of the rights of the tenant; and, when entered upon the official rolls of the realm, known as copyhold rights.

As time went on, this simple economic arrangement was gradually modified: some villains were able to purchase their acres outright, others were given their acres because of military service;

whence a class of freehold yeomen. Some cotters, in turn, were able to work up into the class of villains.

Prior to the middle of the fourteenth century there was little confusion, and, as town life held out scant pecuniary attraction, little desire to leave the soil. The Black Death, however, by removing full half of the working population, produced a scarcity of labor, with the consequent rise in prices; furthermore, by wiping out whole families of tenants and thereby destroying much legal tenure, it tempted the greed of the lords for land monopoly. As the rise in wages did not keep pace with the rise in prices, there was a general exodus of the poorer laboring class, who hoped to find employment in the growing industries of the towns. When the landlords found that no laws, however severe, were able to stop this exodus, they turned to grazing, which the increased demand for wool made profitable, and then were as anxious to get people off the land as before they had been anxious to keep them on it. Thence began the long struggle over "enclosures," which only ended when, with the overthrow of the Crown in the seventeenth century, the landlords found no further impediment to their rapacity.

All through the days of Elizabeth the landlords, as a class, were struggling to get rid of their tenants, or to exact the maximum of rent from them. Moreover, the traditional landlords were reinforced by powerful allies, the new landlords created by the disestablishment of monasteries and the confiscation of the agrarian lands once held by the gilds, the insolent and grasping "new rich," favorites of the Crown; reinforced also by the capitalist landlords who had made their money in commercial life and had turned to land for speculation. Though such yeomen as held their land in freehold were practically free from the aggressors, the lords studiously sought to discredit those who held land by customary tenure or by copyhold, and rack-rented those who merely leased the farms. The old idea of class obligation was fast losing hold, and the new theory of making the land yield the most was fast becoming the landlord's creed. The old landlord and the new landlord—Tory and Whig, shall we call them?—were pitted against the rural population.

When the conduct of a Bishop occasioned such a rebuke as the following, addressed by Lord North to the Bishop of Ely, what was to be expected of the lords as a class: "My lord, it wilbe no

pleasure for you to have hir Majestye and the Councell knowe howe wretchedly yowe live within and without your house, howe extremely covetous, how great a grazier, how marvellous a dayrye man, how ritche a farmer, how grete an owner. It will not lyke yowe that the world knowe of your decayed houses, ... of the leases you pull violently from many, of the copyholdes that yowe lawlessly enter into, of the fre land that yowe wrongfully posese. . . . Yowe suffer no man to live longer under yowe than yowe lyke him.”¹⁹ The history of this whole cruel policy is epitomized in the bitter words which burst from the lips of a nameless victim: “As sheepe or lambs are a prey to the wolfe or lion, so are the poor men to the rich men.”²⁰ The courts of the time were consequently burdened with agrarian litigation.

On the whole, the sympathies of the government were with the yeomen, partly because the government held to the traditional theory of class solidarity, the *status quo*, partly because it wished the food supply to be produced at home, partly because the yeomen would constitute a dangerous ally to an enemy of the Crown, partly because the yeomanry furnished the flower of the army, and partly because, according to the system of taxation in vogue, farming yielded more taxes than grazing.²¹ Yet, in as much as the government was not willing to adopt the fundamental measure of turning customary into legal titles, of fixing judicial rents for leaseholders, and immovable fines for copyholders, such action as it did take was only successful in retarding the oncoming “landlord system.” As a last resort, the tenant could enter his protest before the Court of Star Chamber or the Court of Requests, and when such a protest was valid, relief was forthcoming, yet, because the regulation of agrarian matters was, in conformity to custom, in the hands of the local justices who, in practice, were usually prosperous freehold yeomen in sympathy with the lords, tenants were, for the most part, intimidated. The government thus got the credit of being friendly to the tenants, without antagonizing to a dangerous degree the wealthy and powerful lords and gentry.

Just as the medieval agrarian organization, essentially coöperative in character, was gradually replaced by the landlord system,

¹⁹ Quoted by R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 349.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

²¹ See the citations in Tawney, p. 341 ff.

so the gilds, likewise coöperative, were replaced by the modern organization of capital and labor. In the fourteenth century the craft gilds—associations of all the workers in a particular industry of a given town—were democratic in character: any young man wishing to qualify for a particular trade was welcomed into the gild as an apprentice, the entrance fee was small, the apprentice enjoyed all of the social benefits of the gild, and when he had served his term was expected to set up shop for himself. The master craftsman was artisan, employer, capitalist, and retailer, all in one, for he himself worked, he kept apprentices, he furnished shop and tools, and he sold his own products. In the thirteenth century a change begins to take place, and by the end of the sixteenth century the change is complete. Gradually the gilds become selfish and exclusive: the number of apprentices is limited, only free-born youth are admitted, preference is given to the sons of gild members, the entrance fee is high, the period of apprenticeship is lengthened, apprentices are discouraged from setting up independent establishments, many being thus forced to remain mere journeymen at low wages, and social distinctions arise in the gild itself. Thus, only those who can afford the costly livery of the gild are entitled to vote, and the control of the gild passes into the hands of a few. The gilds also try to discourage competition. Most radical of all, the various functions are separated, so that some wealthy members become manufacturers exclusively, owning extensive plants, hiring many men, and not working themselves, and some become strictly retailers, merely selling the products manufactured by others. These wealthy men come to control the government of the town, and their direction of its industries is absolute. Whiggery thus establishes itself in the municipalities. The inevitable enmity between labor and capital, between wealth and poverty resulted. The sixteenth century saw the decline of the gilds. On the ground that they were religious organizations, in as much as the interest of some of their investments was used to pay for masses in behalf of deceased members, much of their property was confiscated by Henry VIII, and, following the Tudor policy, the regulation of wages and trade was placed in the hands of the justices. The Statute of Apprentices of 1563 regulated the number of apprentices, relieved the entrance conditions, fixed the hours of labor, required long hirings, empowered the justices to determine from time to time what

wages, in view of the supply and demand, should be paid. Though the guilds were thus supplanted, the democracy of the fourteenth century was, of course, not reestablished, for industry had become permanently committed to a policy of labor and capital. Moreover, the working class was relatively unprotected, for the justices were chosen from the "substantial" men of the community. However, it was the intention of the government to better the conditions of the artisan, and, though the rise in wages ever lagged far behind the rise in prices, to some extent this was accomplished.

If the Act of Apprentices accomplished something in providing work for men, there were still very many out of employment, either because they could not find work, or did not wish to work, or were too aged and infirm. These people were a disturbing element in the state: some of them were earnest fellows who had become embittered and preached "dangerous" political and social doctrines; some of them were rogues, bearwards, jugglers, minstrels, fencers, who lived from hand to mouth, encouraged the townsmen to spend their money in idle amusements, and carried disease from one community to another; others were decrepit wretches who, since the dissolution of the monasteries and chantries, the traditional dispensers of alms, were under everybody's feet, with their importunate begging.

The Elizabethan policy shows uniform rigour toward those who were shiftless, but a constantly growing appreciation of the claims of the worthy poor. Acts were passed in 1563, 1572, 1576, 1597, and 1601. In all of these acts extremely harsh measures are proposed for those thought to be idle by preference. Thus, by the act of 1572, rogues and vagabonds are "to bee grevously whipped, and burnte through the gristle of the right Eare with a hot Iron of the Compasse of an Inch about."

That the worthy poor had legitimate claims upon the state was recognized more clearly in each succeeding act. The policy was to throw the burden on the parishes: by the act of 1563, each parish was required to collect alms of all able to pay them; by the act of 1572, the children of vagabonds were to be taken from their parents and put to work, and houses were to be built for the worthy poor; by the act of 1576, the poor were to be made self-supporting by being put to work on materials, such as hemp, flax, and wool, furnished by the authorities, and, if they refused to work, were to be sent to houses of correction; the acts of 1597

and 1601 codified the previous measures. In the main the laws were beneficial and relieved the economic pressure, though, of course, they did not strike at the roots of poverty.

And now to return to Spenser. A poet and an idealist, believing with Aristotle that learning and statesmanship afford the only activities worthy of a noble spirit, and believing in the Biblical doctrine that "the love of money is the root of all evil," he was out of sympathy with the whole commercial spirit of the age. His attitude toward the greed for riches is set forth in the *Faërie Queene*, Book II, Canto 7, where, in an allegory full of the spirit of the medieval moralities, Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, is tempted by Mammon. In response to Mammon's claim that riches, renown, estate, honour, and all worldly goods are his to give, the knight, voicing doubtless the poet's conviction, replies:

Regard of worldly mucke doth fowly blend,
And low abase the high heroicke spright,
That joyes for crownes and kingdomes to contend.

And when Mammon has conducted the knight into the house of riches, and admonishes him,

Loe! here the worldes blis: loe! here the end,
To which al men doe ayme, rich to be made:
Such grace now to be happy is before thee laid,

the knight rejoins:

Another blis before mine eyes I place,
Another happines, another end.
To them that list these base regards I lend;
But I in armes, and in atchievements brave,
Do rather choose my flitting houres to spend,
And to be Lord of those that riches have,
Than them to have my selfe, and be their servile slave.

Slave, indeed! since Payne, Strife, Revenge, Despight, Treason, Hate, Gealosy, Feare, Sorrow, and Care lurk outside the house of riches, and within Sleep is never allowed to enter. The desire for riches is opposed to the Law of Nature, that law of which we read so much in the contemporary philosophers and economists, and which has such potent influence over men's minds, since untroubled nature despises superfluity and escapes those cares which "empeach our *native* joyes."

But an allegory of much more significance in view of contemporary events is that in Book V, Canto 2, wherein Artegall, the Knight of Justice, overthrows Pollente, the extortionate Saracen,

and razes his castle. While this character probably stands for the whole spirit of extortion and monopoly, Spenser clearly is using as one of his models the greedy landlord and land grabber whose rapacity caused so much suffering to evicted or rack-rented tenants and so much trouble to the courts, for he is described as one

Having great Lordships got and goodly farmes,
Through strong oppression of his powre extort,
By which he stil them holds, and keepes with strong effort.

Rich and poor alike are the victims of this extortion, for while Pollente has a groom of evil guise—the hated steward or bailiff of the manor—who “pols and pils the poore in piteous wize,” Pollente himself tyrannizes over the rich. Especially noteworthy is the fact that it is Talus—representing the stern hand of the law—who forces his way into the castle and drags to execution Munera, the hoarder of her father’s ill-gotten gains.

Spenser may have had good reason to feel bitterly toward this class, for it may well have been that his own family had suffered at their hands, since his father, a poor London clothmaker, was descended of a freehold family, and was probably one of those men who sought in the city that livelihood which they were no longer able or permitted to wrest from the soil.

But if, on the one hand, Spenser condemned the greedy monopolist of land and business, he condemned with equal severity that class of men—the “lusty vagabonds” of the Elizabethan laws—who refused to work and who wandered about the country engendering class hatred and preaching radical economic and social doctrines. This class is shown up in the conflict between Justice and Communism²² and in the program of the Fox and the Ape in the *Mother Hubbard’s Tale*, as they sally forth to impose upon the world, relying upon their false doctrine of equality and fraternity:

Thus therefore I advize upon the case,
That not to anie certaine trade or place,
Nor anie man, we should our selves applie;
For why should he that is at libertie
Make himselfe bond? sith then we are free borne,
Let us all servile base subjection scorne;
And as we bee sonnes of the world so wide,
Let us our fathers heritage divide,

²² *F. Q.*, 5, 2. See my article on *Spenser’s Arraignment of the Anabaptists*, *Journal Eng. and Germ. Phil.*, 12, 3.

And chalenge to our selves our portions dew
 Of all the patrimonie, which a few
 Now hold in hugger mugger in their hand,
 And all the rest doo rob of good and land.
 For now a few have all, and all have nought,
 Yet all be brethren ylike dearly bought:
 There is no right in this partition,
 Ne was it so by institution
 Ordained first, ne by the law of Nature,
 But that she gave like blessing to each cature,
 As well of worldly livelode as of life,
 That there might be no difference nor strife,
 Nor ought cald mine or thine: thrice happie then
 Was the condition of mortall men.
 That was the golden age of Saturne old,
 But this might better be the world of gold;
 For without golde now nothing wilbe got,
 Therefore (if please you) this shalbe our plot:
 We will not be of anie occupation;
 Let such vile vassals, borne to base vocation,
 Drudge in the world, and for their living droyle,
 Which have no wit to live withouten toyle;
 But we will walke about the world at pleasure
 Like two free men, and make our ease our treasure.
 Free men some beggars call, but they be free,
 And they which call them so more beggers bee;
 For they doo swinke and sweate to feed the other,
 Who live like Lords of that which they doo gather,
 And yet doo never thanke them for the same,
 But as their due by Nature doo it clame.²³

It is significant that, though Spenser might have availed himself of the logic of Aristotle, who attacked the philosophic supports of communism on the ground that personal possession is at the bottom of affection, harmony, and real unity, he was content to fall back upon the unscientific method of the Reformers—Melanchthon, Calvin, Bullinger, Hooper—who defended the right of private property on the supposed authority of the Scriptures, and explained the economic inequality as part of the inscrutable workings of Providence:

He pulleth downe, he setteth up on hy;
 He gives to this, from that he takes away,
 For all we have is his: what he list doe, he may.²⁴

²³ 128 ff.

²⁴ *F. Q.*, 5. 2. 41.

In this passage from the *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, Spenser recognizes that both the enemies and the advocates of private property quote the Law of Nature in defense of their contentions. His own sympathies are with the advocates, for he defends inequality of possession on the ground that like inequalities exist in nature, yet without envy:

The hils doe not the lowly dales disdaine,
The dales doe not the lofty hils envy.
He maketh Kings to sit in sovereignty;
He maketh subjects to their powre obey.²⁵

Apparently Spenser did not see the inevitable inconsistencies in which such a theory of property involved him. If "He pulleth downe, he setteth up on hy," are we to assume that the Deity was a party to the choice of Elizabeth's ministers of whom the poet complained so often and so bitterly; and if "He gives to this, from that he takes away," are we to assume that Justice always overtakes every grasping Pollente, and always compensates every one of his victims? Does God compel justice in human affairs, despite the selfishness and indifference of mankind? If so, why was the poet so scornful of the captains of industry that were rising about him, and why should he complain—as it will be seen later that he does—because the Irish nobility had "undone the poor tenants?" If God thus cares for his children, why was the poet so incensed at his own lack of fortune and advancement?

So far as one may judge from the single passage in which usury is mentioned, Spenser held to the traditional position of the Church, and had not accepted the new theory of interest that grew out of the changing monetary conditions, though he may have distinguished between legitimate interest and "accursed usury." In the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins the poet speaks of usury as the trade of avarice:

And greedy Avarice by him did ride,
Uppon a Camell loaden all with gold:
Two iron coffers hong on either side,
With precious metall full as they might hold;
And in his lap an heape of coine he told,
For of his wicked pelfe his God he made,
And unto hell him selfe for money sold:
Accursed usury was all his trade,
And right and wrong ylike in equall ballaunce waide.²⁶

²⁵ *F. Q.*, 5. 2. 41.

²⁶ *F. Q.*, 1. 4. 27.

If the poetry expresses the political and economic views of Spenser the idealist, the *View* shows him the practical agent and advisor of the government, who had matured a careful policy for the reformation of the affairs of that unfortunate realm. To this day the poet's name is a synonym in Ireland for Machiavellism, but one must bear in mind that it is a sixteenth century document, not a twentieth century one, and that it was addressed to a Queen and a Council who had well-defined policies of government and well-defined theories of economics. There is, indeed, not a little evidence to show that Spenser was mapping out a policy that would protect Ireland from the economic evils that had recently grown up in England.

The first recommendations are for the subjugation of the realm. Believing that England had always pursued an ineffective, half-way policy, the poet feels that the most merciful procedure and the most economical would be to send a very large army and break the spirit of the Irish once for all, crush those who were rebellious until the very heart was taken out of them: kill their cattle, drive them into the barren wastes in winter, and only show mercy when they dragged forth their starved bodies and plead for food. It is a terrible proposal, uttered with cold deliberateness, but Spenser had come to feel that the Irish had largely degenerated into a race of cattle thieves and robbers, thriftless, ignorant, debased, ready to take an oath when cornered, ready to break it when free. The land once subjected, families were to be removed from the counties where they had lived and to be scattered, so that the old clan feeling would be broken. Permanent garrisons were to be placed at strategic points; old soldiers, seasoned for service, were to be placed on the land; and free, corporate towns—since towns are ever the enemies of lawlessness—were to be established. Over all Ireland was to be placed a Lord Lieutenant, an office which should be filled by some very eminent Englishman. Under him was to be a Lord Deputy who, with the aid of a Council, would bear the brunt of the burden of government; in the words of Spenser, "Which may keepe them afterwards in awe and obedience, and minister unto them justice and equitye." There was also to be a Parliament, in the lower house of which the regular Irish members would be outnumbered by imported English freeholders, burgesses, and such loyal Irishmen as would be made knights of

the shire; and in the upper house of which the Irish lords would be checked by the creation of a sufficient number of baronets.

For purposes of tithing, the commonalty were to be divided into shires, hundreds, and tens, each ten to be responsible for the payment of all its tithes, each hundred responsible for its tens, and each shire for its hundreds. Gentlemen were to be tithed in a similar way, since the term "gentleman" was used with a good deal of latitude in Ireland. Nobles, among whom there was not much assessable property anyway, were to be surety for one another. The tithes were to be assessed and collected by justices of the peace, acting for the Crown, rather than by the lords. This had distinct advantage: it would emphasize the claims of the crown, both politically and financially; it would prevent the lords from assessing unfairly; and it would break down their prestige, thus lessening the danger of their leading the commoners to insurrection. "And this is the reason," says the poet, with full understanding of the Tudor policy of curtailing the power of the lords by dealing directly with the commons, "this is the reason that ye have fewe such badd occasions here in England, by reason that the noblemen, however they should happen to be ill disposed, should have noe commaunde at all over the comunaltie, though dwelling under them, because that everye man standeth uppon himselfe, and buildeth his fortunes upon his owne fayth and firme assuraunce: the which this manner of tithing the polls will woorke also in Ireland."²⁷

Moreover, since the lords had wrested the land from the original tenants and bestowed it upon relatives, or had imposed all kinds of servitude upon their tenants, who were ignorant of their own rights, a commission was to be appointed to examine titles and redistribute the land, care being had to provide for many loyal English immigrants. It is well to quote the passage relative to pillage and rack-rent, since it shows Spenser's attitude toward the general policy of landlords: "Surely they may be well enough; for most of those lordes, since theyr first grauntes from the Kinges by which these landes were given them, have sithence bestowed the moste parte of them amongst theyr kinsfolkes, as every lorde perhaps in his time hath given one or other of his principall castells to his yonger sonne, and other to others, as largely and as

²⁷*View*, p. 673.

amplie as they were given to him; and others they have sold, and others they have bought, which were not in theyr first graunte, which nowe nevertheless they bring within the compass therof, and take and exacte upon them, as upon their first demeanes, all those kind of services, yea and the verye wilde Irish exactions, as Coignye and Liverye, for him, and such like, by which they poll and utterly undoe the poore tenaunts and freeholders unto them, which either through ignoraunce knowe not theyr tenures, or through greatness of theyr newe lordes dare not challenge them; yea, and some lordes of countreyes also, as greate ones as themselves, are nowe by strong hand brought under them, and made theyr vassalls. . . . For reformation of all which, it were good that a commission should be graunted forth under the Greate Seale. . . . Thereupon would appeare, first howe all those greate English lordes doe clayme those great services, what signiories they usurpe, what wardeshipes they take from the Queene, what landes of hers they conceale; and then howe those Irish captaynes of countreyes have encroched upon the Queenes freeholders and tenautes, howe they have translated the tenures of them from English holding unto Irish Tanistrie, and defected her Majestie of all the rightes and duties which are to accrewe to her therout, as wardeships, liveryes, mariadges, fines of alienations, and manye other comodities; which nowe are keppe and concealed from her Majestie to the value of 60.000 L yearely, I dare undertake, in all Ireland, by that which I knowe in one countye."²⁸

To encourage industry, provision was to be made that any one not able to live of his freehold should be appointed to some trade. This passage contains an interesting classification of labor and shows the poet's attitude toward various aspects of the agrarian problem:

Irenaeus. The next thing that I will doe shalbe to appointe to everye one, that is not able to live of his free-holde, a certayne trade of life, to which he shall finde himselfe fittest, and shalbe thought ablest, the which trade he shalbe bounde to followe, and live onely therupon. All trades therefore, it is to be understood, are to be of three kindes, manuall, intellectuall, and mixt. The first contayning all such as needeth exercise of bodylye labour to the per-
 fourmaunce of theyr profession; the other consisting onelye of the exercise of witt and reason; the third sort, partly of bodelye labour, and partly of witt, but depending most of industrie and carefullness. Of the first sorte be all handycraftes and husbandrye labour. Of the second be all sciences, and those

²⁸ P. 674.

which are called the liberall artes. Of the thirde is marchandize and chafferie, that is, buying and selling; and without all these three there is noe common-wealth can almost consist, or at the least be perfect. But that wretched realme of Ireland wanteth, the most principall of them, that is, the intellectuall; therefore in seeking to reforme her state it is specially to be looked unto. But because of husbandrye, which supplyeth unto us all necessarye thinges for foode, wherby we cheifly live, therefore it is first to be provided for. The first thing therfore that we are to drawe these newe tithed men unto, ought to be husbandrye. First, because it is the most easye to be learned, needing onely the labour of the bodye; next, because it is most generall and most needefull; then, because it is most naturall; and lastlye, because it is most enemy to warre, and most hateth unquiettness: As the Poet sayeth,

—'bella execrata colonis:'

for husbandrye being the nurse of thrift, and the daughter of industrie and labour, detesteth all that may woorke her hinderaunce, and distroye the travell of her handes, whose hope is all her lives comforte unto the plowgh: therfore all those Kearne, Stokaghs, and Horseboyces are to be driven and made to employe that ablenesse of bodye, which they were wonte to use to thefte and villanye, hencefoorth to labour and industrie. In the which, by that time they have spent but a litle payne, they will finde such sweetness and happy contentment, that they will afterwarde hardly be hayled away from it, or drawn to theyr woonted lewde life in theeverye and rogerye. And being thus once entred thereunto, they are not onely to be countenaunced and encouraged by all good meanes, but also provided that theyr children after them may be brought up likewise in the same, and succede in the roomes of theyr fathers. To which end there is a Statute in Ireland allreadye well provided, which comaundeth that all the sonnes of husbandmen shal be trayned up in theyr fathers trade, but it is (God wote) very slenderlye executed.

Eudoxus. But doe you not counte, in this trade of husbandrye, pasturing of cattell, and keeping of theyr cowes, for that is reckned as a parte of husbandrye?

Irenaeus. I knowe it is, and needfullye to be used, but I doe not meane to allowe anye of those able bodyes, which are able to use bodely labour, to followe a fewe cowes grasing, but such impotent persons, as being unable for strong travell, are yet able to drive cattell to and fro the pasture; for this keeping of cowes is of it selfe a verye idle life, and a fitt nurserye of a theefe. For which cause ye remember that I disliked the Irish manner of keeping Bolyes in Sommer upon the mountaynes, and living after that savadge sorte. But yf they will algates feede many cattell, or keepe them on the mountaynes, lett them make some townes neere the mountaynes side, where they may dwell together with neighbours, and be conversaunt in the viewe of the world. And, to say truth, though Ireland be by nature counted a great soyle of pasture, yet had I rather have fewer cowes kept, and men better mannered, then to have such huge encrease of cattell, and noe encrease of good condicions. I would therefore wish that there were made some ordinaunces amongst them, that whosoever keepeth twentye kine should keepe a plough going, for otherwise all men would fall to pasturing, and none to husbandrye, which is a great cause of this dearth nowe in England, and a cause of the usuall stealthes nowe in Ireland: For looke

into all countreyes that live in such sorte by keeping of cattell, and you shall finde that they are both verye barbarous and uncivill, and also greatly given to warre.²⁹

Speculation in corn was to be prohibited, since it had been found mischievous in England: "Therefore it were good that a straighthe ordinaunce were made, that none should buye or sell any cattell but in some open markett (there being nowe markett townes everye where at hand) upon a great penaltie; neither should they likewise buye any corne to sell the same agayne, unless it were to make malte therof; for by such engrossing and regrating we see the dearthe that nowe comonly raigneth heere in England to have bene caused."³⁰

Nor were the liberal arts to be neglected, for lords, gentlemen, and those able to afford it, were to educate their children, each parish keeping one petty schoolmaster, adjoining the church, and each county or baroney, one able master.

Finally, the vagabond was not to be forgotten, and the provisions for his welfare show no softening of the customary severity of the Elizabethan laws, show, indeed, the same harsh spirit already met with in the passage from the *Mother Hubbard's Tale*:

Nowe that this people is thus tithed and ordered, and everye one bound unto some honest trade of life, which shal be particularly entred and sett downe in the tithing booke, yet perhaps there wil be some stragglers and runnagates which will not of themselves come in and yeeld themselves to this order, and yet after the well finishing of this present warre, and establishing of the garri-sons in all strong places of the countrey, where theyre woonted refuge was most I doe suppose there will fewe stand out, or yf they doe, they will shortly be brought in by the eares: But yet afterwarde, least any one of these should swarve, or any that is tyed to a trade should afterwarde not followe the same, according to this institution, but should straggle up and downe the countrey, or miche in corners amongst theyr frendes idlye, as Carooghs, Bardes, Jesters, and such like, I would wish that there were a Provost Marshall appoynted in everye shire, which should continuallye walke through the countrey, with halfe a douzen, or half a score of horsemen, to take up such loose persons as they should finde thus wandring, whom he should punnish by his owne authori-tye, with such paynes as the persons should seeme to deserve: for yf he be but once taken soe idlye roging, he may punnish him more lightlye, as with stockes, or such like; but yf he be founde agayne soe loytring, he may scourge him with whippes, or rodde, after which yf he be agayne taken, lett him have the bit-terness of the marshall lawe.³¹

²⁹ Pp. 677-678

³⁰ P. 681.

³¹ Pp. 678-679.

Spenser went on the traditional assumption that there was work for every man who was willing to work; he did not perceive that in the new economic organization poverty was inevitable for some, and he therefore made no provision, as had been done in recent legislation in England, for the worthy poor.

Such is Spenser's scheme for Ireland. Politically, it conforms strictly to the Tudor policies of the domination of the Crown and the centralization of authority. Needless to say, only a document of this political color would have been acceptable. Economically, it is a conservative document, unsympathetic to the current economic tendencies in England,—land monopoly in the country, and speculation and monopoly of trade in the cities. Moreover, it proposes what alone could have brought adequate relief to the agrarian situation in England, an explicit determination and legalizing of all holdings. If put into effect, it would have reproduced with some approach to faithfulness the English economic life of an earlier period.

Spenser's conception of society is essentially aristocratic. Though his father was a poor London clothmaker, so poor that the son was the recipient of charity while a student at the Merchant Tailor's school, and a sizar at Cambridge, he was yet "a gentleman by birth," a descendant of a freehold family that had enjoyed an honorable repute in Lancashire for three centuries, and related to certain of the lesser nobility. The poet made the most of this relationship, dedicating poems to each of the three daughters of a certain Sir John Spencer—Elizabeth, Lady Carey; Alice, Lady Strange; and Ann, Countess of Dorset—, whom he describes as

The honor of the noble family
Of which I meanest boast myself to be.

Thus born in the outskirts of gentility, the poet cast hungry eyes at the happy lot of those who enjoyed the full rights of its citizenship, and his constant study was to win favor and position. Never did churl more feverishly itch to be allowed to sit at the banquet of the great, and he fluctuated between hope and disappointment.

Yet Spenser held in contempt many of the aristocracy of the day, either families of long standing nobility, who had forgotten the traditions of the past, and who had substituted the low-lived activities of the courtier and the vulgar amusements of the town for deeds of valor and the noble exercises of chivalry, or new

families that had suddenly been raised to affluence by grants of confiscated property or had won recognition in the new world of finance, men who, ignorant, vulgar, grasping and conceited,

borne of salvage brood,
And having beene with Acorns alwaies fed,

yet exerted weighty influence. To the former class the poet devotes many a scathing stanza:

For they, to whom I used to applie
The faithfull service of my learned skill,
The goodly off-spring of Joves progenie,
That wont the world with famous acts to fill;
Whose living praises in heroick style,
It is my chief profession to compyle;

They, all corrupted through the rust of time
That doth all fairest things on earth deface,
Or through unnoble sloth, or sinfull crime,
That doth degenerate the noble race,
Have both desire of worthie deeds forlorne,
And name of learning utterly doo scorne.

Ne doo they care to have the auncestrie
Of th' old Heroes memorizde anew;
Ne doo they care that late posteritie
Should know their names, or speak their praises dew,
But die forgot from whence at first they sprong,
As they themselves shalbe forgot ere long.³²

Such constituted a debased or false aristocracy, but aristocracy pure and undefiled—such aristocracy as the poet, idealist that he was, longed to see effective in the life of the nation—was an aristocracy of the chivalric and courtly traditions, wherein men of finer clay, comely in body and brave in spirit, guardians of gentleness, courtesy, and learning, uncontaminated by association with the vulgar common folk, and, while relieved from the debasing struggle for pence and pounds, yet enjoying that freedom which wealth alone can give, devoted themselves to magnanimous service,—nobility by the grace of God.

The passages quoted above from the *View* are sufficient evidence that Spenser recognized the economic desirability of various social classes, and that he did not wish to see the yeoman and burgess robbed of their old-time security and contentment. Socially, however, he was intolerant of them.

³² *Tears of the Muses*, 428 ff.

His estimate of the self-made man, a most interesting study in attitude, may be gathered from what he has to say of the Irish leader, Feugh Mac Hugh: "Surely I can comend him that, being of himself of soe base condition, hath through his owne hardines lifted himselfe up to that height that he dare now to fronte princes, and make termes with great potentates; the which as it is honorable to him, soe it is to them most disgraceful, to be bearded of such a base varlett, that being but of late growen out of the dounghill beginneth nowe to overcome soe high mountaynes, and make himselfe great protectour of all outlawes and rebells that will repayre unto him."³³

The common people are seldom allowed to intrude into fairyland, and then only to act as a foil, by their clownishness, their ignorance and their vice, to the noble knights and ladies. We catch a glimpse of them, "the raskall many," as "heaped together in rude rabblement" they gaze, "with gaping wonderment," upon some doughty knight; we see them "like foolish flies about an hony-crocke," clustering about a demagogue who inflames them with political unrest, a "raskall crewe," in whose base blood the Knight of Justice is loth "his noble handes t'embrew"; or perchance we see some boor burning with lust for gentle lady wandered across his path. If gentleness or honor ever appears among the lowly, it proves to be in some highborn youth or maiden whose real origin is unknown.

The *Tearles of the Muses* is a fountain of laments that the arts have been prostituted to the standards of the multitude, until only the peerless Poetesse, Divine Elisa, and "some few beside" care for beauty of sentiment and purity of expression.

Doubtless all this was very agreeable to the knights and ladies, in satin and lace, whom the poet sought to delight, as they read the magical pages, reclining at their ease, and indulged in the pleasing fancy that they themselves were made of such stuff as Artegall and Calidore, as Amoret and Britomart; very agreeable to be told thus delightfully that

In brave pursuit of honorable deed,
There is I know not (what) great difference
Betweene the vulgar and the noble seed,
Which unto things of valorous pretence
Seemes to be borne by native influence;

³³ *View*, p. 660.

yet one can but wonder if the poet did not have some misgivings, did not feel himself somewhat of a traitor, as he thought of the old clothweaver, and of the lads with whom he had played in his youth, those "vulgar commoners" with whom he had long since broken. Can sixteenth century England have been so different from twentieth century America that such shadows never swept across the poet's mind; so different that, in the hours of disappointment, when the long-hoped-for preferment failed to come, he never felt that he had paid dear for it all? Perhaps so, perhaps not; who shall say?

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